March Gardening To-Do

- Start seeds indoors now of perennials, onions, and slower-growing annuals that needed to be planted 10-12 weeks before the last average frost date (in Iowa, that's in mid-May.) These include snapdragons, annual salvias, and impatiens.
- The last week of March or first week of April, start seeds indoors of annuals that should be planted 6-8 weeks before the last average frost date. These include marigolds, globe amaranth, sweet alyssum, and flowering tobacco.
- Once you can easily work the soil outside, plant directly in the ground seeds of fast-germinating cool-season vegetables, such as radishes, spinaches, and lettuces.
- In southern Iowa, plant bareroot trees, shrubs, and roses at the end of the month, once you can work the soil easily.
- Prevent diseases and insects on fruit trees by spraying with horticultural oil, also called dormant oil. Do so when temperatures are in the 40s.
- Start to prune most deciduous trees and shrubs now, while they're dormant.
- Stock up! Work off your spring fever to buy now pots, potting soil, seeds and seed-starting supplies, tools, soil amendments, fertilizers, etc. You'll save trips to the garden center during the spring rush. And get out there and clean up and organize your garage or shed, wash up pots, etc. so you're ready at the starting gate.
- How's your mower? If you didn't get it tuned up last fall and the blade sharpened, do it yourself now or take it in before the spring rush.
- Same for any shears or other sharp cutting or slicing objects, including spades and hoes. If you haven't already, invest a few bucks in a sharpening stone. It makes <ital>all<no ital> the difference. It's easy after you do it once or twice.

Notes